

“BIOGRAPHY: A GAME” AT BAKEHOUSE THEATRE



Biography: A Game. Image credit: Michael Errey

What if you could change your life from any point you choose?

This is the question that we're made to ponder in **Biography: A Game** by playwright **Max Frisch**, whose works primarily focus on the ideals of identity, individuality, responsibility and morality. A very existential, heartfelt, yet comedic performance by **Bakehouse**

Theatre evokes a sense of reflection through the protagonists of the play Hannes Kermann and Antoinette Stein.

Hannes is a middle-aged behavioral researcher who is given the opportunity to start his life over at any point he chooses. He is infatuated by the overwhelming desire to 'erase' his wife Antoinette of 7 years from his mind – which personally brings about a reminiscent comparison to the film '**Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind**'. Likewise, he revisits many life events that '*could*' have been different, with the central character 'the director' standing by to challenge Hannes' intentions. *Biography* begins like a theatre rehearsal, with Hannes instructing the director to start the play at an earlier point in his story, but every time he attempts to alter his past, the end result is the same; either tragic or not good enough. Ultimately, *Biography* challenges us to think about the ways in which our destiny is determined by the choices we have made in the past, the choices of others and how our path is '*shaped by random factors and our own limited, conditioned selves*'. By transforming the setup of the play to a theatrical rehearsal, Frisch establishes a metaphor for life's endless possibilities.

Image credit: Michael Errey



The audience is immediately immersed in this theatrical atmosphere that represents an essence of Hannes' memory, as well as a place we cannot necessarily recognize, giving it a relateable, universal theme. The set design is constructed like a chess board, the mundane furniture takes us to Hannes' living room with dimmed lighting and main protagonists Antoinette, Hannes, the director and his female and male assistants scattered amongst the display like chess board characters who are in fact all apart of this game we call 'life'.

Director Joh Hartog has an extensive background in theatre, evident in his take of *Biography* that unravels a multi-faceted story that impacts the audience on many levels. His interpretation of Frisch's script is admirable despite it being quite a heavy and deeply emotive text to retell. Combining real, profound and melancholy themes simultaneously gives this performance an unrivaled edge. Joh says that the 'game' Frisch proposes, is one in which the protagonist can make different choices for himself but not for others.

*“Frisch’s game is a game of life and a game of death, a game of hate and a game of love. It’s life.
“– Joh Hartog*

The cast deserve a great deal of recognition for each of their performances that shine from the get go. **Adam Carter** as **The Director** follows Hannes’ do overs, almost like a representation of subconscious thinking – always there, lingering in the background. A dynamic flair boasts from every scene that Carter dominates with an obvious presence fully engrossing the crowd as he takes the stage.

Image credit: Michael Errey



Tim Lucas as **Hannes Kurmann** provides a believable character who is able to make us ponder our own scenarios and situations. His ability to break the fourth-wall by connecting with the audience on a deeper level makes his performance a stand-out. Of course, his counterpart **Krystal Brock** as **Antoinette Stein** enhances Tim’s finest moments, as both characters work in harmony with one another, creating an onstage chemistry that makes their scenes an incredible pleasure to watch. The two assistants **Lisa Harper Campbell** and **Patrick Clements** do wonders as they transition from character to character in a retelling of Hannes’ life events. Their ability to easily adapt into a variety of roles not only engages the crowd, but also showcases their talent in an entertaining way.

After watching *Biography: A Game* it’s easy to question our own life path, wondering whether things would have worked out for the better if we had made a different decision. Continuously living in the ‘what if’ rather than the ‘what is’, disrupts us from the now and the very small yet special moments that have true significance, despite all the pleasure, the pain and the consequences. It is fascinating however, to think about what might have happened if we had made choices differently.

Biography: A Game is playing at **The Bakehouse Theatre in Angas Street, Adelaide** until August 20. You can purchase tickets online [here](#).

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